



CALFED BAY-DELTA PROGRAM

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NEWSLETTER ARTICLE

BUSINESSES ASKED TO WEIGH IN ON CALIFORNIA WATER DECISIONS

SACRAMENTO -- State and federal officials are seeking the business community's input on three potential solutions to one of the state's most vexing problems -- resolving the environmental and water management conflicts associated with California's Bay-Delta system.

The Bay-Delta is a critically important part of California's natural environment and economy. It supplies drinking water for more than 22 million Californians and irrigation water for the state's \$24 billion agricultural industry, which produces, among other things, 45 percent of the nation's fruits and vegetables. It also supports 750 fish and wildlife species, some found nowhere else on the planet. Ultimately, California's trillion-dollar economy, the seventh largest in the world, is at risk if Bay-Delta environmental and water management problems are not resolved.

Today the Bay-Delta is in serious trouble. Over the years, California's need for water from the Bay-Delta system to serve its people and economy has, at times, competed with environmental needs. Some of the levees that protect local homes, farms and infrastructure are at risk of failure, which could cause disastrous floods, contaminate the water supply and interrupt water deliveries to two-thirds of the state. Some fish and wildlife species are listed as endangered, and there are general concerns over water quality and water supply reliability.

In 1995 Governor Pete Wilson and the Clinton Administration entered into a historic cooperative agreement with the state's leading agricultural, environmental and urban interests to develop a consensus solution to these problems.

CALFED Agencies

California	The Resources Agency	Federal	Environmental Protection Agency	Department of Agriculture
	Department of Fish and Game		Department of the Interior	
	Department of Water Resources		Fish and Wildlife Service	
	California Environmental Protection Agency		Bureau of Reclamation	
	State Water Resources Control Board		U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	
				Natural Resources Conservation Service
				Department of Commerce
				National Marine Fisheries Service

"CALFED is a new way of managing our natural resources," says Lester Snow, executive director of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program. "It recognizes that these complex problems cannot be resolved by a government-only approach any more than they can be solved by addressing only the needs of the environment or only the needs of water users. A lasting, equitable solution must address the needs of all sides equally."

Working with stakeholders, through public meetings, working groups and a 31-member public advisory council, CALFED has developed three draft solutions for the Bay-Delta. They range in cost from \$9 to \$10.5 billion and would be implemented over a 30-year period. Each contains actions to address ecosystem restoration, water quality, water supply reliability, levee system integrity and watershed management. They differ primarily in how they would move and store water in the system.

"We need more public input on the trade-offs that need to be made with each alternative," says Snow. "Building a new channel to take some of the water around the Delta from the North directly to pumping plants south of the Delta has the greatest benefit to fish, but it is also the most politically challenging. Another potential solution that would make only minor improvements to the way water flows through the Delta would improve the water quality in the Delta itself, but would not significantly improve the system's overall flexibility."

CALFED will seek public input on the three potential solutions this spring when it holds public hearings throughout the state. The 75-day public comment period for the draft programmatic Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report will begin March 16 and end June 1. For more information, call 1-800-900-3587.

"We must work to find a common ground," says Snow. "California's environment, economy and quality of life depend on it."

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Attachments

- Public Hearing Schedule
- Alternatives at a Glance
- CALFED Solution Area Map

(Note to Editors: Additional graphics can be obtained by calling 619-452-0031, ext. 300.)